ARUP

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Urban Design Study

Executive summary

Executive
summary

Introduction

Borough
overview

Character
areas

Capacity
for growth

Design
guidance

Tall
Buildings

Executive summary

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames commissioned Arup in 2020 to produce an Urban Design Study.

The study includes a townscape character assessment and an assessment of the borough's capacity for growth, bringing together the values, character and sensitivity of different parts of the borough with the reality of future development pressures. The study then assesses opportunities for tall and mid-rise buildings in the borough, illustrated within maps of tall and mid-rise zones of opportunity.

This Urban Design Study is intended as an evidence base to enable the Council to deliver a design led approach to meeting its housing targets through the emerging Local Plan.

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames has an exceptional historic townscape, extensive high quality open spaces and a long, scenic riverside frontage. More than a third of the borough's land area is open space, and many areas are designated for their high quality including 85 conservation areas, 14 Registered Parks and Gardens and Kew World Heritage Site. Its proximity to central London alongside the green setting of many of its thriving high streets, makes it one of the most sought-after places to live and at the same time puts huge pressure on housing availability.

Nationally there is a focus on design in planning policy, reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. Likewise the London Plan focusses on a design-led approach, with greater consideration of character and design. It is important to plan for good growth in a way that optimises capacity, delivers high quality streetscapes, open spaces, and where development contributes to the quality of life of communities.

Character areas

The borough has been divided into nine Places and 36 locally distinctive character areas. Each Place and its constituent character areas are presented in Section 3 as a series of character area profiles.

The character assessment can be used as a standalone evidence base for future planning and policy making, as well as the latter parts of the Urban Design Study.

The character areas within the existing Village Plan Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provided a key starting point for drafting the character area boundaries for this study. Draft character areas and their key characteristics and qualities were verified and refined during field survey and through reviewing feedback from public consultation.

Public consultation has also informed the description and evaluation of the character areas. The information contained within the character profiles includes:

- a description of the key characteristics of the character area;
- an evaluation of character - explanation of the area's valued features and negative qualities;
- an overview of the area's sensitivity to change.

Places

The Places give a high-level overview of character. They aim to reflect a 'sense of place' as well as identifying areas recognised as places by local people. The nine Places of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames are:

A. Hampton & Hampton Hill

B. Teddington & Hampton Wick

C. Twickenham, Strawberry Hill & St Margarets

D. Whitton & Heathfield

E. Ham, Petersham & Richmond Park

F. Richmond & Richmond Hill

G. Kew

H. Mortlake & East Sheen

I. Barnes
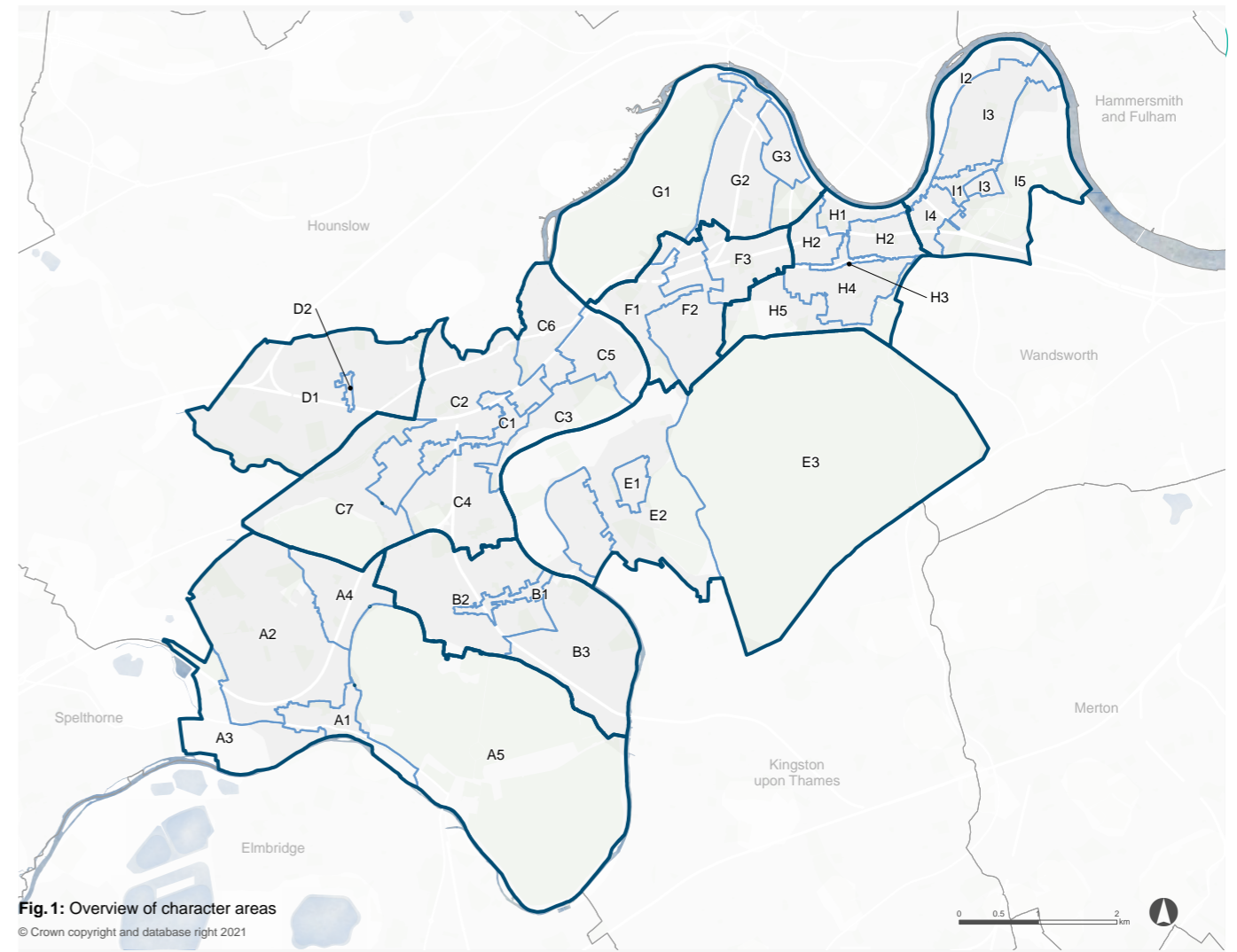
Fig. 1: Overview of character areas
© Crown copyright and database right 2021

Capacity for growth

Capacity for growth is set out in [Section 4,](#) providing a high level assessment of the potential for growth in the borough (specifically in relation to tall buildings) using the character study as an evidence base. The capacity for growth assessment considers sensitivity to change and probability of change together.

Sensitivity to change

The sensitivity assessment is undertaken as part of the characterisation process, considering the value and susceptibility to change of each character area. This process establishes high sensitivity areas unlikely to have capacity for development without adverse effects on townscape character, alongside areas of medium and low sensitivity with the potential for targeted or larger scale growth, where development may provide a positive contribution.
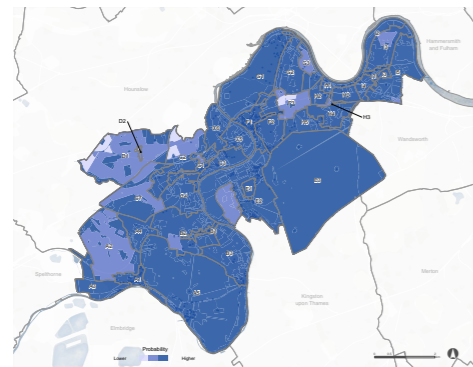
Probability of change

'Probability' of change (also known as 'likelihood' of change) is an assessment of how likely it is for different areas to come forward for development. This is a high level analysis using GIS data for the borough as a whole. Factors which give rise to a higher probability of change include areas which are already designated for development and areas with high levels of public transport accessibility (PTAL). Factors which give rise to a lower probability of change include areas which are designated for their existing use and areas of open space.
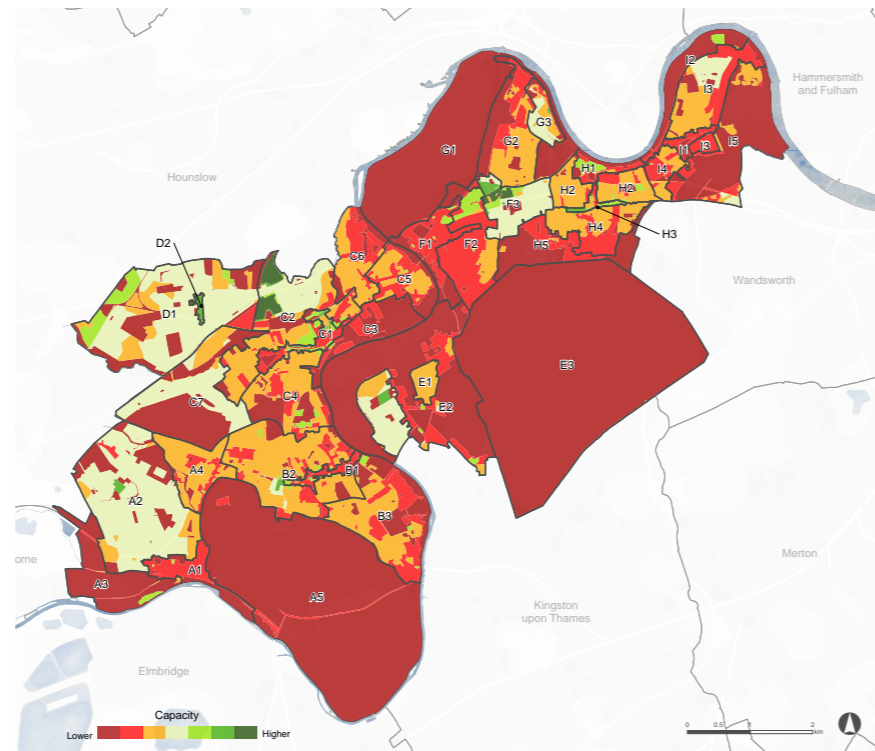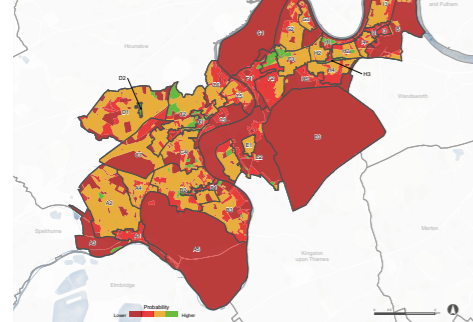
Development capacity

The sensitivity and probability of change are then overlaid to understand the potential **development capacity** of character areas for growth.

Overall development strategy map

The **overall development strategy map** illustrates, at a high level, potential areas of opportunity for tall and mid-rise buildings. It brings together the mapped analysis of development capacity alongside existing and consented tall buildings.

Much of the borough is characterised by highly sensitive areas with a consistently low height residential scale.

The strategy map for tall and mid-rise buildings focuses on:

- the five town centres (Teddington, Whitton, Twickenham, Richmond and East Sheen);
- areas with existing tall buildings, including on the riverside at Hampton Wick and in Barnes on the boundary with LB Wandsworth;
- known areas with emerging masterplans or redevelopment opportunities such as North Sheen, the Stag Brewery site and Kew Retail Park;
- site allocations where relevant, including Twickenham Stadium, The Stoop and in Ham;
- areas along strategic routes where there could be potential for increases in height through mid-rise buildings (Hanworth Road), where the existing character is less consistent.
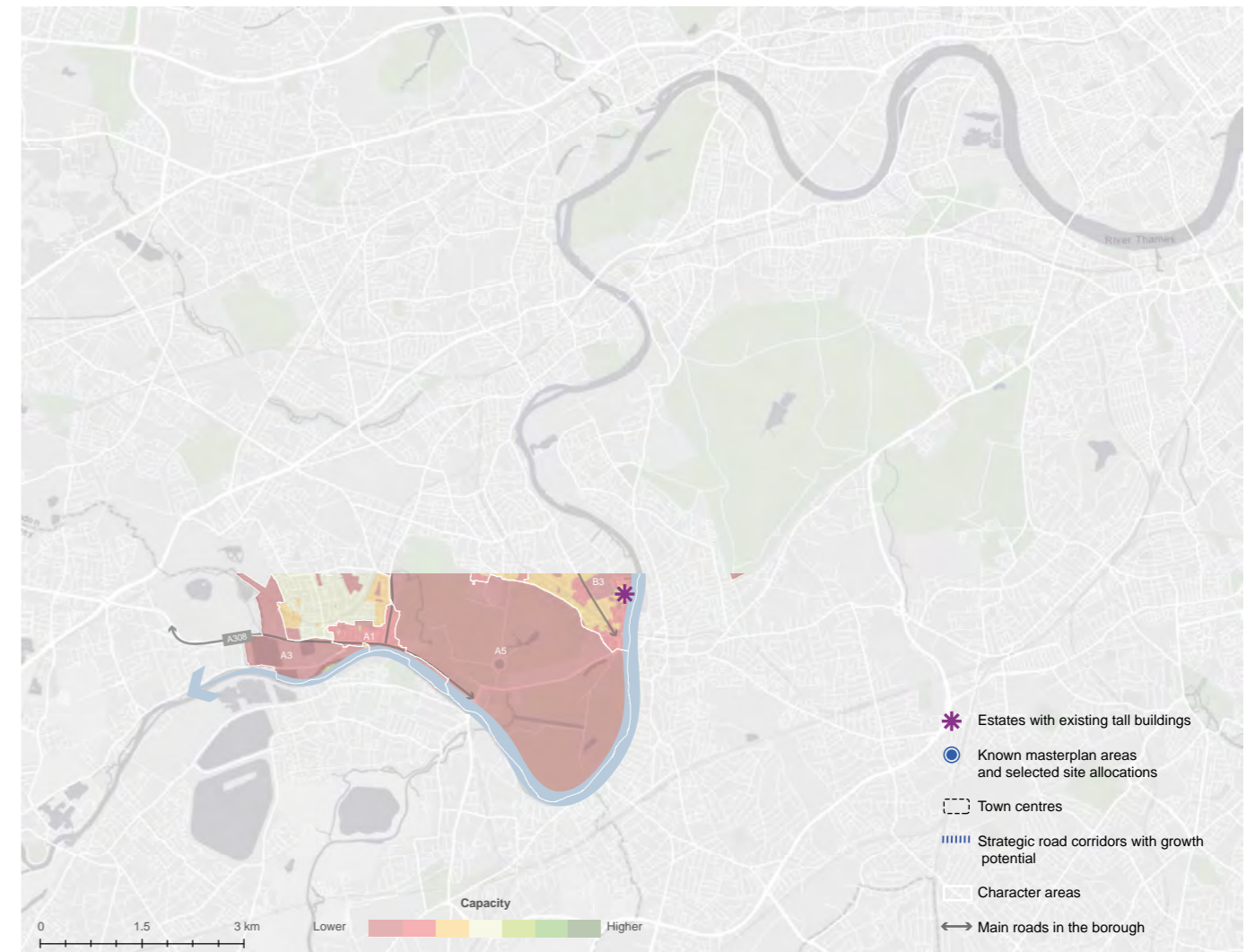
Sensitivity to change map

Probability of change map

Development capacity map

Fig. 2: Overall development strategy for mid-rise and tall building development across the borough
© Crown copyright and database right 2021

Tall buildings zones

The potential areas of opportunity highlighted in the strategy map are tested through hypothetical scenarios and assessment of existing and consented tall buildings development.

The testing considers potentially appropriate heights alongside likely development potential, and the potential impacts they may have on townscape, views and heritage.

The outcome of this process are **tall buildings zones maps** and **mid-rise buildings zones maps** indicating where in the borough tall and mid-rise buildings may be appropriate.
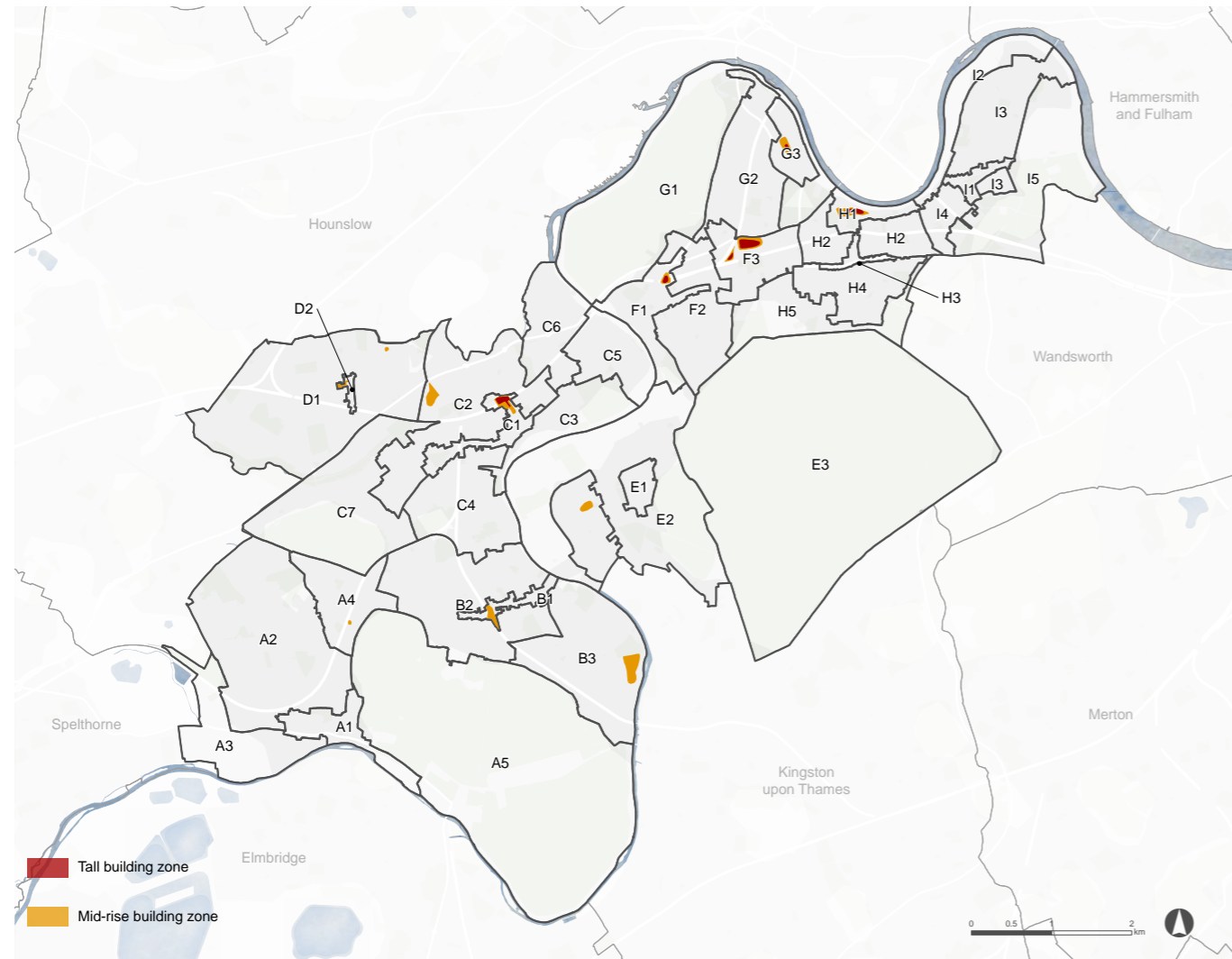
Fig. 3: Tall and mid-rise buildings zones overview map
© Crown copyright and database right 2021

Design guidance

Design guidance is set out in Section 5. This includes general design guidance for tall buildings, small sites and for riverside areas. The design guidance also sets out broad design principles for each character area.

Character strategy

Attached to the design guidance for each character area is a character strategy. This is a high-level summary of the character area overall, in relation to its future development potential. It takes into consideration the key characteristics, valued features and negative qualities set out in the character profiles.

The four character strategies are a 'sliding scale' within which decisions on future development and management will vary at a site specific level. They are based only on character and do not consider other aspects such as viability, which will need to be taken into account for any development decisions.

Conserve

A strategy of 'conserve' does not mean that no development can happen, but that any development must be sensitive in its design, protecting and enhancing the existing character and locally distinctive elements and features.

Enhance

Areas have a strong character and sense of local distinctiveness, but there are some negative qualities which if addressed, could make the existing character of the area even better.

Improve

Areas may be coherent in character but lack local distinctiveness, or have negative qualities which detract from the area. Any future development should, whilst protecting valued features, look to improve character e.g. through interesting details, materials, new public realm features or tree planting.

Transform

For areas where there is little perceptible character, there is an opportunity to create new character whilst addressing negative qualities.

Fig. 4: Richmond waterfront